

Questions and Answers from Town Hall Meeting

Question 1

When the Mayor travelled to Alberta – out of province, to a province which wants to separate – why this was deemed necessary? Please outline reasons for said trip. Please outline benefits from said trip. Please provide a full list of expenses, costs for this trip including, but not limited, to mileage, per diem, meals, hotels, flights. Councillors have repeatedly noted that the Township is suffering from financial difficulties. Council is struggling to find donations to maintain and support volunteer organizations that are supporting and promoting Hornepayne.

Answer:

Council authorized one out-of-province trip to Alberta for three due-diligence purposes:

1. assess a modular housing supplier (Seed Homes);
2. tour a vertical-greenhouse operation;
3. attend the FCM national conference for training and northern advocacy.

Alberta was where the facility, site visit, and conference were located; the destination reflects logistics, not politics.

As a result of this trip, the Township is not pursuing Seed Homes at this time, avoiding a premature major investment, and vendor criteria and next steps were reported to Council and the Hornepayne Housing Corporation.

This trip strengthened northern advocacy through FCM networks, improving the Township's ability to influence federal housing and rural programs.

The costs for travel and registration were incurred under the Township's approved Travel & Expense Policy. An itemized expense report (flights/ground, hotel, meals/per diem, registration) may be provided by request.

Question 2

One of the things I am concerned about is the by-law concerning building permits, I would like Council, when you do your review, it has always bothered me that in Hornepayne if you change the shingles on your roof, if you change your door, if you change your windows, not structural that you need a building permit. There is something that doesn't sit right with me for that. If you look at your insurance policies, after 10 years they lower the amount they are willing to cover. I looked up in Ontario there are no laws that say that you have to pay a building permit to change shingles on your roof like we do in Hornepayne I know you might think its petty but to change a door, change windows to improve your house, I don't think those things require you to have a building permit in Ontario and to pay a fee. I think it wastes staff time at the office and I think it is ridiculous. If I am changing the pitch of my roof, if I am replacing the window with a patio door that's structural. To me that is a whole different ball game, but I think that is

something that I hope that Council will review and take into consideration in the future when you review the by-law and permits.

Answer:

The Township will review the Township's Building By-Law and fee schedule to ensure they align with the Building Code Act, 1992, the Ontario Building Code and common municipal practice.

Additionally, staff will prioritize researching whether "like-for-like" replacements that are non-structural (e.g., re-shingling, same-size door/window swaps) should require a permit or could be exempt or handled by a no-fee notification, while keeping permits for any structural changes (e.g., roof pitch changes, enlarging openings).

Staff will bring Council options with implications for safety, insurance, enforcement, and administrative workload, including potential exemptions and/or reduced fees.

Next steps: timing for the staff report will be communicated publicly; staff will also work to create and publish plain-language guidance so homeowners know clearly when a permit is required.

We appreciate the suggestion and will report back with proposed amendments for Council's consideration.

Question 3

The Community Improvement Plan was delayed, not having a CAO, wondering with the new rebranding, which we see here and its beautiful, as the centre for adventure, what plans and actions are you taking to support this new identity and how are you going to support current business owners who are also helping to align and be successful with this branding?

Answer:

The Community Improvement Plan (CIP) is finalized and being rolled out. Application forms are available – please contact the municipal office and staff will assist with completion.

Council will confirm priority actions and timelines, including supports for business attraction and growth under the new brand at future strategic planning sessions.

Question 4

Regarding the budget – we frequently hear discussions about lack of money in general Councillor Peter Kistemaker went so far as to say we are broke. There was concern regarding the donation budget for an expense as there was already a donation to the snowmobile club now there is an upcoming Santa Claus parade

- 1) What are the travel budget amounts for each councillor?
- 2) If there is unused money, why not move it to the donations

Answer:

The approved annual travel budgets are \$5,000 per Councillor and \$12,500 for the Mayor.

Currently, the Mayor has not used the full allocation, and other Council members are near/at their limits.

Any unused travel funds can be reallocated to the donations line through Council direction, subject to the year-to-date financial position.

Question 5

The Property Standards By-Law has been read a first and second time. It's fairly strict, I am curious about what each councillor feels in relation to whether the community grant and grandfathering, i.e. if people currently have properties now which may not be fitting the property standards will they be required to meet the property standards or will it be for properties moving forward.

Answer:

The by-law has received first and second reading, and Council will hold a fuller discussion before final adoption. The Township's implementation approach will prioritize health, safety, and nuisance issues, and provide a fair, phased path to compliance for existing properties. Council's intent is to include reasonable transition measures ("grandfathering") for legacy conditions that are not health- or safety-related, alongside clear timelines and support where improvements are needed. The Township also plans to align compliance with available assistance, such as the Community Improvement Plan (CIP), to help property owners make upgrades. Details of the transition framework, timelines, and supports will be presented at the meeting where final reading is considered, and the agenda will be posted in advance for public review.

Question 6

Regarding multi-residential tax reductions, I would like to hear from Council what their vision is and how they could see that being utilized to create the infrastructure that Hornepayne needs. Millions of dollars are available to offer things, like seniors or immigration housing for people who can't legally purchase houses when they first get here. I would love to hear your strategy and implementing the policy, if you have specific ideas, would it go through the Housing Corporation or are you hoping for private investors?

Answer:

Mayor Fort emphasized using the Hornepayne Housing Corporation (HHC) as a tool and, where helpful, partnering with neighbouring municipalities to meet federal funding thresholds. She also pointed to existing advantages (serviced lots, derelict building

removals, anticipated landfill expansion) and noted the new multi-residential tax class by-law as a way to attract private investment, especially for seniors' housing.

Councillor Pete Kistemaker expressed full alignment with Council's goal of increasing housing, especially for seniors, while noting that municipal processes are slower than private business. He also stressed commitment to steady progress despite procedural "hoops."

Councillor Drago Stefanic advised that he was supportive in principle but wants detailed logistics, costs, and benefits before committing. He framed decisions as evidence-based and contingent on the best overall solution for the community.

Councillor Belinda Kistemaker was frustrated by past barriers despite having the "tools," and advocated for a tangible pilot – building at least one home to prove the model, demonstrate success, and then scale.

Councillor Ted Scheniman advised he would favour using HHC equity to catalyze projects and prioritize townhouse-style, entry-level, safe, and accessible units with some private outdoor space. He framed housing as a way to support families and community cohesion.

Question 7

In the last little while 3 full time employees have lost their jobs under your supervision, can you explain why?

Answer:

In the recent period, three full-time positions changed for different reasons: one employee retired; one employee resigned voluntarily; and one position was eliminated through an organizational restructuring to align staffing with service and budget priorities.

Question 8

I am completely confused as to why some of the things with restructuring has happened. I tried to educate myself, typically cutting a job is a last resort so I understand saving for efficiency, but often responsible organizations will explore alternatives. So, was that explored? I am just trying to understand the restructuring, the closed sessions, and help the public understand that you do have our best interest by being accountable and transparent.

Answer:

After weighing service impacts, costs, and risks, Council unanimously approved a restructuring, which was determined to be the most sustainable path forward.

Matters involving identifiable employees were discussed in closed session as required under section 239(2)(b) of the Municipal Act. While the Township cannot disclose personal employment information, Council recognizes the human impact and did not take these decisions lightly.

To support accountability and transparency, the updated organization chart, an outline of any service changes, and a clear rationale for the restructuring will be provided at a future public meeting. The Township also acknowledges concerns about staff morale and are taking steps to improve communication and support during the transition.

Question 9:

What are closed sessions?

Answer:

Closed sessions are meetings closed to the public, that are held when Council must discuss matters that the Municipal Act, 2001 allows (or requires) the Township to keep confidential. Examples include personal/HR matters about identifiable employees, land acquisition or sale negotiations, contract and bargaining strategy, training where business isn't advanced, and legal advice protected by solicitor-client privilege. Further information regarding reasons Council may enter a closed session can be found in section 239(2) of the Municipal Act, 2001.

Before going in camera, Council must pass a resolution in open session stating the general nature of the matter, closed session minutes are kept, and any decisions must be made in open session unless they are purely procedural. The Township uses closed sessions only for these limited purposes and report out as much as possible afterward so the public understands what was discussed without breaching confidentiality.

Question 10:

Concerns around closed sessions – is it against the Municipal Act to retroactively identify items to the agendas once something has been revealed or does it always have to go through an MFIPPA request to get that information, or can you identify the date it was discussed once it is known publicly.

Answer:

It is not against the Municipal Act, 2001 to publish a plain-language index that identifies when a topic was considered in closed session once the matter (or portions of it) is public. What must remain confidential are the closed-session minutes and any information still protected (for example, personal information, solicitor-client advice, and ongoing negotiations). In practice, Council must state the general nature of each closed item in the open-meeting resolution before going in camera; after the matter concludes or is publicly announced, the Township may "report out" and can also post a retrospective index showing the dates the topic was discussed, as requested.

Question 11:

I would like us to have an RV septic truck waste station – I was embarrassed a couple summers ago we have to travel to White River to dump waste. As we change our sewer system, we should look at how to provide an RV waste station – especially if we are marketing ourselves for the outdoors.

Answer:

Thank you – the request aligns with the Township’s “Adventure Begins at the Centre” tagline and growing RV use. Staff will assess a municipally operated RV dump station as part of our wastewater upgrades, including suitable locations (e.g., near the treatment plant, public works yard, or a serviced tourism node), user-fee options, and required approvals (MECP/ECA, backflow and pre-treatment, access and winterization). Staff will bring Council a brief feasibility and costing note with funding options (e.g., NOHFC, Canada Community-Building Fund) for Council direction.

Question 12:

Looking through the by-laws today and I know that you have to work with a lot of different people as Council, you have staff that you need to work with, working together as team is really important for you as well as the Township. I’ve noticed that there has been considerable turnover or staffing issues in the last few years within the Township. Have you looked at that as Council, has the CAO tried to figure out what is happening that staff are leaving or resigning. What are you doing to keep staff? Second question is if I have other questions, what is the best way to bring them forth?

Answer:

Council and administration share the goal of a safe, respectful, and stable workplace. Some adjustments are already underway (role clarity, recruitment and onboarding improvements, and coaching for leaders), and additional recommendations will come to Council in a Workforce/HR update. Because individual HR matters are confidential, the public report will focus on organization-wide actions and service implications

If you have further questions or suggestions, please send them to the Clerk’s Office if they are for Council, or request to appear as a delegation at a Council meeting if you wish to speak to an item. For questions to staff, you may submit a “Questions, Comments, Concerns” form on our website. Written correspondence submitted through the municipal office will be acknowledged and, where appropriate, included on a public agenda so that responses are transparent and accessible to everyone.

Question 13:

We have a washroom at the pavilion – while Villeneuve is in town can we finish it off? It’s there, it’s beautiful, let’s use it.

Answer:

The Township shares the goal of opening the pavilion washroom, however, the building does not have an active water service. The former YMCA line on site is not connected to the municipal main, so we must trench across the road, remove and reinstate pavement, and complete plumbing, electrical, and commissioning to bring it online. To manage costs and avoid multiple disruptions, this work is scheduled within our 2026 capital plan alongside planned road rehabilitation.